

**THE REGISTERED VETERINARY TECHNICIAN  
EXAMINING COMMITTEE**

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE SUNSET  
REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE CALIFORNIA  
LEGISLATURE**

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**Board Overview, Issues, Findings  
and Recommendations**

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**Prepared by:  
Joint Legislative Sunset Review Committee**

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# **JOINT LEGISLATIVE SUNSET REVIEW COMMITTEE**

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## **1.**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT REGULATORY PROGRAM**

#### **BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Registered Veterinary Technician Examining Committee (RVTEC) was created by the California Legislature in 1975 to develop and administer a registered veterinary technician (RVT) certifying examination to ensure the competency of individuals who assist veterinarians. Until the names were changed in 1995, the RVTEC was titled the Animal Health Technician Examining Committee and RVTs were designated as Animal Health Technicians.

The RVTEC functions under the oversight of the Veterinary Medical Board (VMB) in the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA). The VMB, with the assistance of the RVTEC registers and regulates approximately 4,200 Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs).

The law governing Registered Veterinary Technicians is not a title act. The law does not grant an exclusive use of the title Registered Veterinary Technician to those individuals who have been certified/registered by the board. However it does prohibit unregistered individuals from performing certain acts that only RVTs are authorized to perform.

Board regulations provide that, under the direct supervision of a veterinarian, an RVT may induce anesthesia, apply casts and splints, perform dental extractions, suture incisions. Regulations provide that a RVT may perform other tasks in an animal hospital setting, pursuant to the order and under the indirect supervision of a veterinarian. RVTs often administer medications, place IV and urinary catheters, perform dental cleanings and assist in surgery. An RVT may also perform animal health care services at humane societies under the indirect supervision of a veterinarian. The law prohibits an RVT from performing surgery, diagnosing animal diseases, and prescribing drugs.

#### **COMPOSITION AND FUNCTION OF THE COMMITTEE**

The committee is presently composed of eight (8) members, of which two (2) are public members, three (3) are licensed veterinarians, and three (3) are RVTs. The six (6) licensed and registered members are appointed by the Governor. One public member is appointed by the Senate Rules Committee and the other by the Assembly Speaker. The VMB has the statutory power to remove any member of the RVTEC for neglect of duty, incompetence, or unprofessional conduct.

The RVTEC recommends reducing the committee from eight to four members and consolidating it under the VMB, stating: "Reducing the size of the RVTEC to a four-

member subcommittee under the VMB would be adequate for program needs; however, past legislative efforts to consolidate the RVTEC under the VMB, have been unsuccessful.” In 1994, SB 1821 (Kelley) proposed to reduce the RVTEC to 5 members, and was vetoed by the Governor. In his veto message the Governor cited concerns over reducing executive branch appointments.

Currently, there are four vacancies on the RVTEC. The current vacancies, as well as those in the past make it difficult for the committee to fulfill its tasks. The average time for appointments to the RVTEC has been a minimum of 1 1/2 years.

The RVTEC is mandated to *assist* the VMB in the examination of RVT applicants. The RVTEC also assists the VMB in inspecting and approving private schools which offer veterinary technician training. Two-year college programs are accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the national professional association. The RVTEC conducts inspections of private institutions who wish to provide RVT programs jointly with the Council for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education under a memorandum of understanding. The RVTEC may also investigate, evaluate and make recommendations to the VMB regarding applicants for registration.

The RVTEC does not have authority to promulgate regulations.

REGISTRATION DATA	FY 1992/93	FY 1993/94	FY 1994/95	FY 1995/96
<b>Reg. Veterinary Technician</b>	Total: <b>3,625</b>	Total: <b>3,810</b>	Total: <b>4,009</b>	Total: <b>4,245</b>
Current				2,846
Delinquent				1,378
Other (includes deceased)				21
Applications Received	181	188	204	
Applications Denied	0	0	0	
Licenses Issued	181	188	204	
Renewals Issued	1,163	1,294	1,486	

## BUDGET AND STAFF

The main sources of revenue for the RVTEC are application and examination fees, and registration renewal fees. These funds are separate from the VMB funds and are deposited into the Registered Veterinary Technician Examining Committee Fund.

The committee’s projected expenditures for fiscal year 1996/97 are about \$97,000; anticipated revenues are about \$110,775.

According to the 1996/97 Governor’s Budget, the committee’s reserve June 30, 1996 was \$35,000. As of June 30, 1997, the committee will have reserves estimated at \$50,000, or

52% of its total budget. The committee does not expect any new revenue sources, fee increases, or budget change proposals during the next two fiscal years.

For fiscal year 1996/97, the committee expects to spend \$53,000 on the administration of its examinations, or 55% of its total budget. The committee expects to spend \$26,000 on enforcement, or 26% of its total budget. Other boards spend on average about 7% of their budget on examinations and 66% on enforcement.

The committee has a staff of one and one authorized position for 1995/96. The executive officer of the VMB also serves as the committee's executive officer.

## **FEES**

The committee's registration is good for two years and expires on the registrants birth month. The committee's current fee structure is as follows:

<b>Fee Schedule</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Statutory Limit</b>
Exam Application Fee	\$75	\$100
Initial Registration (2 year)	\$50	\$100
Initial Registration (1 year)	\$25	\$50
Registration Renewal	\$50	\$100

## **REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS**

To become registered as registered veterinary technician in California, a candidate must complete a two-year program in veterinary technology at a college or postsecondary institution approved by the VMB, or the equivalent as determined by the board and pass the board's examination. As alternatives, specified educational requirements, experience requirements or combined education and experience requirements have been established by the board as equivalent to the two-year program. California has the most eligibility routes of any state in the nation. Currently, forty-one other states regulate RVTs, with California serving as a national model. Thirty states have mandatory and eleven have voluntary certification.

- The committee administers its own state examination. About 400 California candidates take the exam annually. For 1996 the passage was 46% in March and 56% in August.
- In 1986, a Job Validation Study and Occupational Analysis was completed on the examination. The validation study was updated in 1990 and is scheduled to be updated in 1997 or 1998.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION/COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS**

There is not a statutory requirement that RVTs participate in continuing education as a condition for registration renewal. However, the board does have authority to require continuing education. The VMB and the RVTEC are studying the possibility of establishing such regulations.

## **ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY**

Enforcement authority for RVTs is entirely within the VMB. The RVTEC has no enforcement authority over RVTs. The VMB has limited enforcement authority against RVTs. An RVT registration can be revoked or suspended only for fraud or misrepresentation in obtaining registration; conviction for certain crimes; chronic substance abuse; professional connection to the illegal practice of veterinary medicine, or violating or aiding and abetting the violation of the practice act.

The RVTEC points out that complaints by the public are directed against the veterinarian not the veterinary technician. This is most likely due to the fact that the pet owner holds the veterinarian/employer responsible for all activities occurring in their facility. RVTs do not work autonomously. Except in the limited situations of public animal shelters and certain emergencies, RVTs must work under the supervision of a veterinarian when performing any animal health care task.

In addition, the VMB focuses its enforcement efforts on veterinarians rather than on veterinary technicians, and veterinarians are held responsible for the competence of their employees.

Furthermore, there are no enforcement or disciplinary actions that have been taken by the board against any registered veterinary technician. Additionally it has been noted in the VMB minutes: "There is no known disciplinary action against any RVT in any state" (See VMB Report, Attachment A.6, Veterinary Medical Board Meeting Minutes, July 1, 1996, p. 3.)

The VMB has administered a Drug and Alcohol Diversion Program for both veterinarians and RVTs since 1984. The RVTEC states that there is no record of an RVT participating in the Diversion Program in the past, nor are any RVTs currently participating.

The enforcement activity of the RVTEC consists of the inspection along with the Council for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education of educational programs of private schools who wish to offer RVT training programs.

## **CONSUMER OUTREACH AND EDUCATION**

The RVTEC has been involved in consumer education and outreach on the role of the RVTEC and how to file complaints. This has been accomplished by booths at the California State Fair and California Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA)

conventions; presentations by the Executive Officer to veterinary students at the University of California at Davis; newsletter articles and applications packets. The RVTEC is working with the VMB to develop a consumer information Internet web page that will provide immediate access to information such as the office address, how to file a complaint, document costs, how to get an examination application.

## 2.

### **IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE SUNSET REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**ISSUE #1. Should the registration of veterinary technicians be continued?**

**Recommendation:** *The State Veterinary Medical Board should continue to regulate Veterinary Technicians.*

**Comment:** RVTs provide medical services to animals, often without the direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian. Generally, they are allowed to perform many critical tasks and procedures, which if done improperly, could pose serious risk to an animal's life, health or safety. For example, they are allowed to render emergency animal care without supervision and in accordance written instructions. These emergency procedures are usually performed by a licensed veterinarian. They also work in settings where veterinarian supervision is limited, such as in animal shelters, biomedical research firms, and commercial food production industries.



**ISSUE #2. Should the Registered Veterinary Technician Examining Committee be continued, or are there other alternatives to the current regulatory program?**

**Recommendation:**

*Since the Registered Veterinary Technician Examining Committee performs no regulatory functions, recommend that an advisory committee be created under the Veterinary Medical Board. Recommend that the advisory committee be comprised of a total of five-members chosen by the Board, including three veterinary technicians, one veterinarian Board member, and one public Board member. This advisory committee of the Veterinary Medical Board would not be subject to a subsequent sunset review.*

**Comment:** The enforcement and regulatory authority for RVTs is entirely within the Veterinary Medical Board. The RVT Examining Committee, consisting of appointed members, primarily handles the administrative and examination functions for the Board. The Veterinary Medical Board, the RVT Examining Committee, the California Veterinary Medical Association, and the Legislative Analyst's Office have recommended eliminating the RVT Examining Committee and creating an advisory subcommittee under the Veterinary Medical Board.

Other boards are given statutory authority to create "advisory committees" to the governing board. An RVT subcommittee of the Board could make recommendations concerning the training, education, examination, and practice of RVTs, and perform other functions as deemed appropriate by the Board. The RVT Examining Committee is currently comprised of eight-members: three veterinarians, two public members and three RVTs. As a non-appointee advisory committee, this number should be reduced, and be comprised primarily of RVTs.